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ABSTRACT

Two Swahili dictionaries and two bilingual dictionaries by the same author (one English-Swahili and one Swahili-English) are evaluated for their form and content, with illustrations offered from each. Aspects examined include: the compilation of headwords, including their meanings with relation to basic and extended meanings; treatment of polysemous words; definitions of headwords; grammatical labelling; use of phonetic symbols; and use of illustrations. It is concluded that all three require major revision in order to incorporate many of the principles of dictionary construction discussed here and to be efficient and effective information sources. Contains 13 references. (MSE)

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DICTIONARY MAKING:
A CASE OF KISWAHILI DICTIONARIES

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DICTIONARY MAKING: A CASE OF KISWAHILI DICTIONARIES

Dictionary-making, which is very useful for our daily life, has in recent times, received great attention. Many dictionaries, of all kinds of languages, have recently come into existence to serve the practical needs of humanbeings. Yet, a number of these dictionaries have been written along non-professional lines in the sense that these dictionaries have ultimately become less authoritative. Obviously, a good dictionary must be authoritative. Banhart (1979) examines these authoritative features of a dictionary. This paper, is therefore, based on the contention that Kiswahili dictionary-making must be based on sound lexicographic rules if it is intended to deliver its goods satisfactorily to the consumers.

Dictionary-making is an essentially practical activity which is as old as a man's concern with written communication. And throughout their existence, dictionaries have been used for various purposes e.g. as a guide about pronounciation of a word, spelling, ~~emblogy~~ etymology, idioms, etc. Consequently, dictionaries come in all shapes and sizes and serve both laymen and specialists. This is to say also that dictionaries are of numerous types, compiled by different kinds of lexicographers and consulted by untold numbers of users fôr a variety of reasons.

Hartman (1983) gives a succinct description of the purposes of which the user of a dictionary aims at. The purposes are graphically explained below:

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THE FACTORS OF DICTIONARY USE

INFORMATION	OPERATIONS
Meanings/synonyms	finding meanings
pronunciation/syntax	finding words
spelling/etymology	translating etc.
names/facts, etc.	

SITUATIONS OF DICTIONARY USE

USERS	PURPOSES
Child	extending knowledge of the mother tongue.
pupil/trainee	learning foreign language
teacher/critic	playing words games
scientist/secretary, etc.	composing a report reading/decoding FL texts, etc.

PRINCIPLES IN DICTIONARY-MAKING

Landau (1984), Jackson (1988) and others have discussed certain principles which are essential for a good dictionary work. We shall discuss these principles below and then see how Kiswahili dictionary makers adhere to them.

Source and Target

First of all, it is important that a good standard dictionary must show the source of its corpus. The source can be of two forms: written and oral. The written form consists of words that originate from various academic texts that are referred to while the oral one is made up of data that derives as a result of interaction by lexicographers with informants, etc.

Secondly, a dictionary must show right from the beginning,the target to whom it is aimed for. We have graphically shown this earlier when we stated that the consumers of the dictionary could be pupils, trainees, teachers, scientists, secretaries and so on.

COMPILATION OF HEADWORDS

While we are compiling alphabetically polysemous headwords, it is also important to remember that the basic meaning of each headword must first be described. For example: in the case of the headword star, we can have this kind of description:

star	n	1. anyone of the distant bodies appearing as a point of light in the sky at night.
		2. Asterisk.
		3. a famous or very skillful performer, singer,sportsman, etc.
		4. planet or heavenly body believed to influence a person's life, luck, etc.

In the case of homonyms, it is important that each headword needs to carry a numeral to differentiate the meanings of these words that are homographs. For example:-

bear[1]	n	a large heavy animal with thick rough fur and usually eats fruits and insects as well as flesh.
bear[2]	v	1. carry from one place to another; carry away; convey.

2. support a weight or load; hold up.

3. have or show a mark or characteristic.

DESCRIPTION OF HEAD WORDS

Landau (1984), Jackson (1988), Bwenge (1993) and Mdee (1992) point out the description of headwords in dictionary-making must be brief, unambiguous and easily understood by the user of a dictionary. In addition, the description must avoid circumlocution. These principles are very important in the preparation of a good dictionary work.

GRAMMATICAL LABELLING

Cowie (1983) discusses the significance of grouping headwords along their grammatical categories regardless of whether those words are related or not. He calls this grouping as grammatical labelling. For exmaple:

export[1]	v	send goods out of a country for sale.
export[2]	n	the business of exporting.
in[1]	prep.	inside, within: I kept the money in the box.
in[2]	adv.	away from the open air, the outside: open the box and put the money in the box.
in[3]	adj.	directed inwards; used for sending or going in: He picked my letter in the

in tray.

This 'grammatical labelling' is also important because it justifies the fact that in dictionary making, the crucial thing is the function of the word and not the form when words are examined from their contexts. Words of the same from can be used differently in different contexts.

AIDS IN DICTIONARY-MAKING

Rukiramakuba (1993) and Mdee (1993) discusses the significance of aids like pictures and diagrams in dictionary-making inorder to elucidate the meanings of headwords. We can argue here that pictures or diagrams are significant in dictionary-making because they facilitate the comprehension of a particular headword especially if it is culturally foreign to the user of the dictionary.

KISWAHILI DICTIONARIES AS THEY EXIST TODAY

In this paper, we are considering three Kiswahili dictionaries which have been in circulation for many years: A Standard Swahili-English and A Standard English-Swahili By Frederick Johnson, Kamusi Ya Kiswahili Sanifu, by the Institute of Kiswahili Research, University of Dar-es-Salaam and Kamusi Ya Maana na Matumizi by Salim K. Bakhressa.

SOURCE AND TARGET

The dictionaries cited above have not clearly outlined the sources of their data although one would assume here that perhaps, the headwords in those dictionaries emanate from the written and oral mediums. As for the target, the two dictionaries, namely Kamusi Ya Kiswahili Sanifu and

Kamusi Ya Maana Na Matumizi have clearly stated their targets. Both the two books have shown that the publications are aimed for the general public with emphasis on students and teachers.

COMPILATION OF HEADWORDS

We have discussed earlier that the basic meaning of a headword must come first before the extended meaning. We have also given some examples to illustrate this point. When we examine the dictionaries under scrutiny, we see that this principle is not properly followed. For example, in Kamusi Ya Maana Na Matumizi, the word abudu 'adore' that stands as a headword has no extended meaning. Ideally, the word abudu is polysemous. The basic meaning of 'abudu' is, 'adore' and the extended meaning is 'love' something very much. Bakhressa's dictionary does not show this polysemous meaning of the word abudu. Johnson's dictionary also treats the word in a similar way. Infact, Johnson's dictionary categorically states that the word abudu is only restricted to religious worship. And this is not true. There are many other instances where headwords such as adui 'enemy', aibu 'disgrace' athari 'impact', etc. are treated as if they do not possess polysemous meanings. Similarly, the word dawa when it refers to 'medicine' can be interpreted as a basic meaning while the extended meaning refers to the solution or the unfolding of a problem. Johnson's dictionary and the one published by the Institute of Kiswahili Research, University of Dar-es-Salaam have overlooked this extended meaning of the word dawa. These examples and others illustrate the point that the dictionaries we are examining have not defined satisfactorily the meanings of headwords vis-a-vis basic and extended meaning relationships.

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LUMPING OF DEFINITIONS

The dictionaries in scrutiny have not consistently adhered to the principle of separating polysemous words by using numerals to differentiate the meanings of those headwords that are polysemous. For example, in Johnson's dictionary, the word fifia is described as 'be dying away', 'fade', 'spine', 'dribble away', 'disappear', etc. This treatment of fifia in Johnson's dictionary is not proper because the word is polysemous. Thus, Johnson's dictionary should have described fifia as follows:

fifia	v	1. (in colour) fade, blank, blanch, blench, wash out.
		2. pine, weeken, decline.

Bakhressa's dictionary has generally overlooked this principle of using numerals to define polysemous words as in the case of fifia. Other words such as ndumakuwili 'blindworm' have also been treated in the same way. Johnson does not discuss this word exhaustively. He only defines the basic meaning of the word but fails to describe its extended meaning and that is 'a double faced person'.

UNSATISFACTOY DEFINITIONS OF HEADWORDS

We have argued in the beginning that according to Landau (1984), Jackson (1988) and others, definitions of headwords must be clear, brief and satisfactory. In examining those dictionaries, we find that in a number of cases, these principles are not followed properly. For example, the dictionary of Kamusi Ya Kiswahili Sanifu describes chenga as a kind of fish. Similarly, the words biliwili, bano, chembeu, bange, etc. all referring to fish, have been described in a similar manner, that is, a kind of fish. Obviously, these definitions are unsatisfactory because the user of this dictionary would like to know the various properties connected with these types of fish e.g. colour, shape, etc. Likewise, Johnson's dictionary has also given unsatisfactory definitions of such headwords. For instance, he describes biliwili as a kind of fish, not considered to be good by Europeans. The fish known as bange has also been described along the same lines. No attempt was made to describe the colour, shape, etc. for these kinds of fish.

Bakhressa defines numbi as a kind of fish. Again, no attempt was made to describe the distinct features of this fish that differ from other species.

GRAMMATICAL LABELLING

Earlier, we have pointed out that Cowie (1983) and others have argued that 'grammatical labelling' is necessary in dictionary making. The dictionaries of A Standard Swahili-English, A Standard English-Swahili and Kamusi Ya Kiswahili Sanifu

have generally adhered to this principle. Yet, a few flaws are still seen in this kind of grammatical classification. For example, in Kamusi Ya Kiswahili Sanifu, the word asubuhi 'morning' is categorized as a noun and an adverb. But the user of this dictionary needs to know the context upon which each part of speech of the word can be used. Other words such as baidi 'distant', barabara, 'exact' and 'road', hadidi 'iron' and 'firm' have been shown to possess dual part of speech but no attempt has been made to show the context upon which each part of speech is used. Similarly, other words like baradhuli 'stupid', bubu 'dumb', habithi, 'cruel' have been entered into one grammatical entry and that is noun. These words, as we know, can also function as adjectives when they co-occur with a copular verb.

Bakhressa's dictionary has completely overlooked this area of grammatical labelling. And for this reason, we also find that although a word like dai 'demand' can function both as a noun and as á verb, the author has failed to examine it as a noun. Other verbs such as hesabu 'count' hisi 'feel', hofu 'fear' also possess dual part of speech that is verb and noun but these words have been treated as if they belong to only one part of speech.

Johnson has also failed to treat the element of grammatical labelling satisfactorily. He, for example, shows that the word barabara belongs to one class and that is noun. This word as we know, can also function as an adverb when a stress is put on the second syllable of the word.

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ABSENCE OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS

All the dictionaries in scrutiny have failed to show the phonetic transcriptions of their head-words. This is a serious flaw because the dictionaries are expected to be used by native as well as non native speakers. Consequently, non-native speakers would find it hard to understand the correct pronounciation of each word especially when they come across homonyms and loan words where the stress of a word becomes generally irregular.

AIDS IN DICTIONARY MAKING

The two basic dictionaries, namely Kamusi Ya Kiswahili Sanifu and A Standard Swahili-English and English-Swahili dictionaries are totally devoid of pictures or diagrams to illustrate the various headwords given. Some of these headwords have concepts that may not be easily understood by a dictionary user especially if the concept is culturally foreign to him. Certain African names of animals and fruits such as nyamera 'topi' and fiwi 'lima bean' may not be understood by a non-African dictionary user. For this reason, it becomes difficult for him to understand those concepts if pictures or diagrams are not shown.

CONCLUSION

The dictionaries under examination require major revisions to incorporate many of the principles that have been discussed in this paper. Without these revisions, the flaws will continue to exist and ultimately confuse the users of the three dictionaries. The non professionlism of dictionary making will thus remain as a major weakness because of the failure to observe

fundamental lexicographic rules.

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